



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Ad Reinhardt

**A Finding Aid to the Ad Reinhardt Papers,
1927-1968, in the Archives of American Art**

by Erin Corley

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution
Creator:	Ad Reinhardt
Title:	Ad Reinhardt papers
Dates:	1927-1968
Quantity:	3.8 linear feet
Abstract:	The papers of Ad Reinhardt measure 3.8 linear feet and date from circa 1927 to 1968. The collection documents Reinhardt's career as an abstract painter, cartoonist, and writer through biographical material, correspondence, writings, printed material, scrapbooks, and artwork.
Language:	The records are in English.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The collection was donated in 1969 by Rita Reinhardt, Ad Reinhardt's widow. The Archives microfilmed most of the collection on Reels N69-99 to N69-104 upon receipt. At the same time, Ms. Reinhardt loaned additional notes, writings, correspondence, photographs of art work, and travel logs for microfilming on the same reels.

Separated Material

Originals of loaned material were returned to Rita Reinhardt after microfilming. Material loaned for microfilming, including additional notes, writings, correspondence, photographs of art work, and travel logs, is available on the microfilm reels N69-99 - N69-103. Loaned materials are not described in this finding aid.

Related Material

Related material found in the Archives includes Ad Reinhardt postcards (to Katherine Scrivener), Ad Reinhardt letters and artwork (loaned material, available on microfilm only), Abe Ajay correspondence with Ad Reinhardt, Marjorie Grimm printed material and letters received from Ad Reinhardt, one photograph of Ad Reinhardt and Colette Roberts by William R. Simmons, and a 1955 painting by Ad Reinhardt.

Alternative Forms Available

The bulk of the collection was digitized in 2010 and is available via the Archives of American Art's website. Documents containing sensitive personal information and clippings and documents unrelated to Ad Reinhardt have not been scanned.

Processing Information

The collection received some processing shortly after it was donated in 1969 and prior to microfilming on Reels N69-99 - N69-104. Previously microfilmed and unmicrofilmed portions were merged, arranged, and described in accordance with archival standards by Erin Corley in 2006 and digitized in 2010 with funding provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Preferred Citation

Ad Reinhardt papers, 1927-1968. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

Use of original papers requires an appointment.

Ownership and Literary Rights

The Ad Reinhardt papers are owned by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Literary rights as possessed by the donor have been dedicated to public use for research, study, and scholarship. The collection is subject to all copyright laws.

Biographical Note

Ad Reinhardt was born Adolph Dietrich Friedrich Reinhardt in 1913 in Buffalo, New York. Shortly after he was born, his family moved to Queens, New York. As a child he copied "funnies" and made collages from newspapers and won many school and community prizes for his artwork. In the fall of 1931 he entered Columbia University and studied art history under Meyer Schapiro, who encouraged him to get involved in radical campus politics. Reinhardt became the editor and cover designer of *Jester*, a campus magazine. After graduating in 1935, he trained as a painter at the National Academy of Design under Karl Anderson, and at the American Artists School under Francis Criss and Carl Holty, until 1937. At this time he joined American Abstract Artists and became affiliated with American artistic-political groups and other artist organizations. From 1936 to 1941 he worked for the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Federal Art Project, Easel Division, while simultaneously developing his mature style of linear, abstract painting.

When his work for the Federal Art Project ended, Reinhardt worked as a commercial and freelance writer and graphic artist for pamphlets and magazines. Most notably, he was a reporter and cartoonist for the newspaper *PM* from 1942 to 1947. After serving in the Navy from 1946 to 1947, he took a position as an art history professor at Brooklyn College where he taught for twenty years. During his career as a professor he was also a visiting lecturer at several universities, including Yale University from 1952 to 1953, and the California School of Fine Arts in 1950. Reinhardt had a keen interest in Asiatic art and would often lecture and write on this subject. In the late 1950s and early 1960s he traveled to Japan, India, Persia, Egypt, Turkey, Syria, and Jordan.

Reinhardt began exhibiting his paintings early in his career. In 1946 he joined the Betty Parsons Gallery, which also represented many other prominent Abstract Expressionists, including Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, and Jackson Pollock. Reinhardt rejected the emotionalism found in Abstract Expressionism and sought to produce geometric, minimalist paintings. In developing his own aesthetic theory, he wrote extensively for art periodicals such as *Art News* and *Art International*. His artwork culminated in the 1960s with his series of black paintings, which drew much attention from the art community and the public. A major retrospective of his work was held at the Jewish Museum in New York, NY, in 1960. Reinhardt continued to write and work on his series of black paintings until his death in 1967.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Ad Reinhardt measure 3.8 linear feet and date from 1927 to 1968. The collection documents Reinhardt's career as an abstract painter, cartoonist, and writer through biographical material, correspondence, writings, printed material, scrapbooks, and artwork.

Biographical material includes personal and professional records, such as passports and membership cards as well as an artist's chronology, and material documenting Reinhardt's time at Brooklyn College and his work for the WPA. Correspondence is of a general nature, including letters from art galleries, museums, and art dealers about exhibitions and artwork, colleges and universities concerning lectures and workshops, and letters from friends, art critics, and fellow artists, including Lucy Lippard, Abe Ajay, and George Rickey. Also found are letters from magazines and various art and social organizations. Writings and notes include calendars, and a small amount of notes and draft writings by Reinhardt. Printed material comprises the largest series in the collection and contains exhibition materials, including invitations and catalogs, and a large number of magazine and news clippings, primarily about Reinhardt's career and modern art, but also covering other topics of interest to him, such as Asian art. Also found in this series are clippings of his published cartoons and

artwork. Scrapbooks contain additional printed material documenting his high school and college days, as well as his career as an artist. Also found within the papers is a small amount of artwork by Reinhardt, primarily small sketches.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into 6 series.

Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1928-1967 (Box 1; 0.3 linear feet)

Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1930-1967 (Boxes 1-2; 1.1 linear feet)

Series 3: Writings and Notes, circa 1953-1966 (Box 2; 7 folders)

Series 4: Printed Material, circa 1927-1968 (Boxes 2-4; 1.7 linear feet)

Series 5: Scrapbooks, circa 1928-1959 (Boxes 4-5; 0.5 linear feet)

Series 6: Artwork, circa 1946, 1950, 1961 (Box 4; 4 folders)

Index Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Archives of American Art under the following index terms. People, families and organizations are listed under "Subjects" when they are the topic of collection contents and under "Names" when they are creators or contributors.

Subjects:

Brooklyn College--Faculty

United States--Works Progress Administration

Subjects-Topical:

Art, Modern

Authors--New York (State)--New York

Cartoonists--New York (State)--New York

Painters--New York (State)--New York

Types of Materials:

Scrapbooks

Works of art

Series Descriptions/Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1928-1967 (Box 1; 0.3 linear feet)

Biographical material documents Reinhardt's personal life, as well as his career and his participation in the art community. This series contains several drafts of an artist's chronology written by Reinhardt that places his life and career in the context of the larger modern art movement and illuminates many important moments in his life. Also included are numerous identification documents, such as his passports, membership cards to various art, political, and social organizations, and a fellowship application form containing an artist statement and other biographical information. Also found are materials documenting Reinhardt's service in the military, his work for the WPA, and his professorship at Brooklyn College. This series contains Reinhardt's high school yearbook, business cards and event ephemera collected by him, his address book and lists, as well as exhibition labels from exhibits at Betty Parsons Gallery and the Jewish Museum.

Folders are arranged alphabetically and items are arranged chronologically within each folder. This series has been partially scanned. Items not scanned include those containing sensitive personal information.

Box	Folder	
1	1	Address Books and Lists, undated
	2	Artist's Chronology, circa 1965
	3	Blood Donor Registration Book, 1939, 1942 (Not scanned)
	4	Brooklyn College Faculty Forms, 1957, 1963
	5	Business Cards, undated (Not scanned)
	6	Credit Cards, 1963-1967 (Not scanned)
	7	Event Ephemera, 1963, 1966, undated
	8	Exhibition Labels, circa 1956-1960, 1967
	9	Fellowship Application Form, 1958
	10	Identification Cards, 1940, circa 1952-1953, undated (Not scanned)
	11	Material on Frank and Olga Reinhardt, 1957
	12	Membership Cards, 1936-1966, undated
	13	Newton High School Yearbook, 1931
	14	New York University Bursar's Receipts, 1946-1951
	15	Passports, 1952, 1958, 1961, 1966
	16	Selective Service Documentation, 1941-1945
	17	United States Navy Records, 1940-1945
	18	Veterans Administration Documentation, 1945-1952 (Not scanned)
	19	Works Progress Administration Documentation, 1940-1941
	20	Miscellaneous Biographical Material, 1928-1966, undated

Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1930-1967 (Boxes 1-2; 1.1 linear feet)

This series contains correspondence documenting Reinhardt's career as an artist and art professor, with the bulk of the material dating from 1946 to 1966. Most of the letters are incoming, and there are only a few draft copies of outgoing letters written by Reinhardt. Found in this series are several letters from artists, including Abe Ajay,

cartoonist Dave Crockett Johnson, Helen Frankenthaler, George Rickey, and May Wilson, as well as letters from art critics and writers, including Lucy Lippard, and Ned O'Gorman. Reinhardt also received a large number of letters from art galleries and art dealers, including Betty Parsons Gallery, Iris Clert, Dwan Gallery, and Jock Truman, and art museums, including the Museum of Modern Art, Jewish Museum, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, regarding the exhibition, loan, or sale of his artwork. Numerous letters in this series concern his participation as a guest lecturer, visiting artist, or symposium participant at colleges and universities throughout the country, as well as his professorship at Brooklyn College.

Reinhardt was a member of many art, political, and social organizations and his involvement is documented here in letters from groups such as the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, and the Foundation for the Arts, Religion, and Culture. Also included are letters from magazines and other publications to which he contributed articles and artwork, including *PM* newspaper and *Artforum*. There is also a large amount of fan mail sent to *PM* and to Reinhardt in praise of his series of drawings of the history of modern art for that newspaper. Miscellaneous folders include letters of the same type mentioned above which only consist of one or two letters from a correspondent. Notable correspondents within the miscellaneous folders include Josef Albers, John Ashbery, John Cage, Columbia Pictures Corporation, Mathias Goeritz, Peggy Guggenheim, Jasper Johns, Donald Judd, Ray Johnson, Ellsworth Kelly, Robert Kennedy, Robert Motherwell, Claes Oldenburg, Barbara Rose, Meyer Schapiro, and Russel Wright.

Letters are arranged alphabetically by correspondent. This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Box	Folder	
1	21	A, Miscellaneous, 1946-1966, undated
	22	Ajay, Abe, 1963-1964
	23	American Federation of Arts, 1957-1964
	24	American Institute of Architects, 1962
	25	Architectural League of New York, 1956-1964
	26	Art Association of Indianapolis, 1965-1966
	27	<i>Artforum</i> , 1966
	28	Art Institute of Chicago, 1963
	29	Arts Fraud Investigation, 1966
	30	B, Miscellaneous, 1943-1966, undated
	31	Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, 1963-1965
	32	Betty Parsons Gallery, 1961-1964
	33	Brooklyn College, 1946-1966
	34	Bucknell University, 1965-1966
	35	C, Miscellaneous: Ca-Ch, 1946-1966
	36	C, Miscellaneous: Ci-Cu, 1930-1967, undated
	37	Carpenter, Charles, 1963
	38	Clert, Iris, 1960-1966
	39	Cleveland Museum of Art, 1964-1966
	40	Columbia University Teachers College, 1934, 1944-1962
	41	Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), 1963-1965
	42	Cooper Union, 1955-1966

43 Crockett Johnson, Dave, 1961-1966
44 D-E, Miscellaneous, 1946-1966
45 Dayton Art Institute, 1959-1966
46 *Dissent* Magazine, 1963-1966, undated
47 Dlugoszewski, Lucia, 1963-1965, undated
48 Dwan Gallery, 1962-1966
49 F, Miscellaneous, 1935-1966
50-53 Fan Mail, 1946-1948, undated (4 folders)
54 Finlay, Ian Hamilton, 1963-1966
55 Fitzsimmons, James, 1962-1966
56 Foundation for the Arts, Religion, and Culture, 1962-1966
57 Frankenthaler, Helen, 1966-1967
58 G, Miscellaneous, 1944-1966
59 George Braziller, Inc., 1962-1966
60 Graham Modern Painting and Sculpture, 1964-1965
61 Guggenheim Museum, 1961-1963
62 H, Miscellaneous, 1940-1967
63 Hess, Thomas, 1954-circa 1966
64 Hewitt, Frank, 1966
65 Hunter, Sam (Rose Art Museum), 1963, undated
66 I-J, Miscellaneous, 1945-1967
67 Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1964-1966
68 Jewish Museum, 1962-1966
69 K, Miscellaneous, 1946-1965
70 L, Miscellaneous, 1943-1966
71 Lippard, Lucy, 1966-1967
72 Longview Foundation, Inc., 1963-1964
73 Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1965-1966
74 M, Miscellaneous: Ma-Me, 1947-1956, undated
75 M, Miscellaneous: Mi-Mu, 1948-1966, undated
76 Maryland Institute College of Art, 1964-1966
77 Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, 1966
78 Museum of Modern Art, 1952-1966
79 N, Miscellaneous, 1940-1966

Box	Folder	
2	1	National Council of Women of the United States, Inc., 1965
	2	New Jersey Water Color Society, 1960-1961

- 3 O-P, Miscellaneous, 1943-1966, undated
- 4 O'Gorman, Ned, circa 1964-1967
- 5 Ohio State University, 1959-1966
- 6 *PM* Newspaper, 1946-1948
- 7 Powers, Marcella, 1946-1947
- 8 Q-R, Miscellaneous, 1957-1966, undated
- 9 Rickey, George, 1963-1965, undated
- 10 S, Miscellaneous, 1943-1967
- 11 School Art League of New York City, 1948-1966
- 12 Southern Illinois University, 1961-1963
- 13 Syracuse University, 1957, 1966
- 14 T, Miscellaneous, 1942-1965, undated
- 15 Truman, Jock, 1964-1965, undated
- 16 U, Miscellaneous, 1939-1966
- 17 University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1956-1965
- 18 University of Oregon, 1963
- 19 V, Miscellaneous, 1956-1966
- 20 Village Art Center, 1949-1963
- 21 W, Miscellaneous, 1938-1966, undated
- 22 Wadsworth Atheneum, 1963-1965
- 23 Waggaman, John F., circa 1966
- 24 Washington Gallery of Modern Art, 1965-1966
- 25 Whitney Museum of American Art, 1953-1962
- 26 Wilson, May, 1961-1963
- 27 Y-Z, Miscellaneous, 1943-1947, 1963
- 28 Yale University, 1952-1966
- 29-30 Unidentified letters, 1944-1967, undated (2 folders)

Series 3: Writings and Notes, circa 1953-1966 (Box 2; 7 folders)

Scattered writings include annotated calendars compiled by Reinhardt, drafts of published writings, such as the essay "Who is Responsible for Ugliness," drafts of letters, and other notes and lists on topics including modern art, aesthetics, and his career as an artist. Also found are lists of Chinese words and phrases written by Reinhardt during his study of Chinese art, a small number of photocopies from microfilm of other writings on art, and select pages from Reinhardt's notebooks. The only item in this series that wasn't written by Reinhardt is a progress report submitted to Reinhardt by a student in one of his classes.

Researchers should note that many of Reinhardt's notebooks and other extensive writings were loaned for microfilming and returned to the donor and are only available on reels N69-99 and N69-103. These writings are not listed in this finding aid.

Items are arranged by type of material and chronologically within each folder. This series has been partially scanned. Items not scanned include those that are prints of the microfilm.

Box	Folder	
2	31-32	Calendars, 1958-1963, 1965 (2 folders)
	33	Chinese Words and Phrases, undated
	34	Draft Writings and Notes, 1953, 1966, undated
	35	Pages from Notebooks (Photocopies), undated
	36	Progress Report from Student, 1961
	37	Writings about Art (Photocopies), undated

Series 4: Printed Material, circa 1927-1968 (Boxes 2-4; 1.7 linear feet)

This series contains published material that Reinhardt collected to document his career as an artist and his research on various topics. Included are numerous newspaper and magazine clippings of articles about his artwork and modern art in general, including articles written by Reinhardt. Also found are clippings that Reinhardt collected on other topics such as Asian art, architecture, Christian art, and aesthetics, and book reviews on many of these topics. Many of these clippings are annotated by Reinhardt with handwritten comments and underlined segments. Also in this series are announcements, invitations, catalogs, and posters for exhibitions of Reinhardt's art and the artwork of others, as well as other event announcements, calendars, and press releases for lectures, workshops, and benefits. Other items found here are brochures, conference programs, journals and newsletters from organizations, publications from his time as a student, and examples of his published artwork, including covers of *Listen* magazine and clippings of his numerous published cartoons.

Items are arranged by type of material and chronologically within each folder. This series has been partially scanned. Items not scanned include clippings and other items not related to Ad Reinhardt.

Box	Folder	
2	38	Book Reviews, 1962, undated
	39	Brochures, 1940, 1959, 1966, undated
	40-61	Clippings, Ad Reinhardt and Modern Art, 1931-1967, undated (22 folders)
	62	Clippings, African and Pre-Columbian Art, undated (Not scanned)
	63	Clippings, Architecture, undated (Not scanned)
	64	Clippings, Art History and Aesthetics, 1935, 1965-1967, undated (Not scanned)

Box	Folder	
3	1	Clippings, Artwork by Others, undated (Not scanned)
	2-4	Clippings, Chinese and Japanese Art, undated (3 folders; not scanned)
	5	Clippings, Christian Art, undated (Not scanned)
	6-7	Clippings, Indian Art, undated (2 folders; not scanned)
	8-9	Clippings, Persian Art, undated (2 folders; not scanned)
	10	Clippings, Various Topics, 1952, 1963-1966, undated (Not scanned)
	11	<i>Columbia Review</i> , 1935, 1938
	12	Conference Programs, 1953-1966
	13	Event Announcements, 1946-1966, undated
	14	Event Calendars, 1956-1957, 1960-1966 (Not scanned)

15-19	Exhibition Announcements and Invitations, 1946-1967, undated (5 folders)
20-24	Exhibition Catalogs, 1940-1968, undated (5 folders)
25	Exhibition Posters, 1944-1966, undated
26-27	Journals and Newsletters, 1945-1949, 1956-1966, undated (2 folders)
28	<i>Listen Magazine Covers</i> , 1940-1941, 1944
29	Movie Posters (photo-reproductions), circa 1930
30	Navy Booklets, 1943-1945 (Not scanned)

Box	Folder	
4 (hol)	1	Press Releases, 1946, 1964-1966, undated
	2-6	Published Cartoons by Reinhardt, 1936-1960, undated (5 folders; partially scanned)
	7	<i>Red and Black of Public School 88</i> , 1927 (Not scanned)
	8	Miscellaneous Printed Material, 1938-1966, undated

Series 5: Scrapbooks, circa 1928-1959 (Boxes 4-5; 0.5 linear feet)

Scrapbooks compiled by Reinhardt document his high school and college days, as well as his early career as a professional artist. Included in his scrapbook from Newtown High school and his scrapbook from his time at Columbia University are clippings of his published comic strips, covers of magazines and other school publications that he designed, as well as clippings of articles about his role in school events and awards that he won. Also found here are loose scrapbook pages spanning twenty years of his career as an artist which contain newspaper and magazine articles about Reinhardt, published cartoons, pages from exhibition catalogs, and reproductions of his artwork.

Items are arranged chronologically. This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Box	Folder	
4 (hol)	13	High School Scrapbook, circa 1928-1932

Box	Folder	
5 (hol)	1	Columbia Scrapbook, 1932-1935
	2-8	Scrapbook Pages, 1939-1959, undated (7 folders)

Series 6: Artwork, circa 1946, 1950, 1961 (Box 4; 4 folders)

This series contains artwork by Reinhardt including homemade Christmas cards, drawings of international architectural styles, primarily churches and temples, a sketch of a leaflet for an artist strike, and various other small sketches.

This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Box	Folder	
4 (hol)	9	Christmas Cards, undated
	10	Drawings of Architectural Styles, undated
	11	Sketch for Fine Artist Strike Leaflet, 1961

